

Address of
PRESIDENT TAFT

American Society
for the
Judicial Settlement
of
International Disputes

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AT THE BANQUET OF THE
AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR THE
JUDICIAL SETTLEMENT
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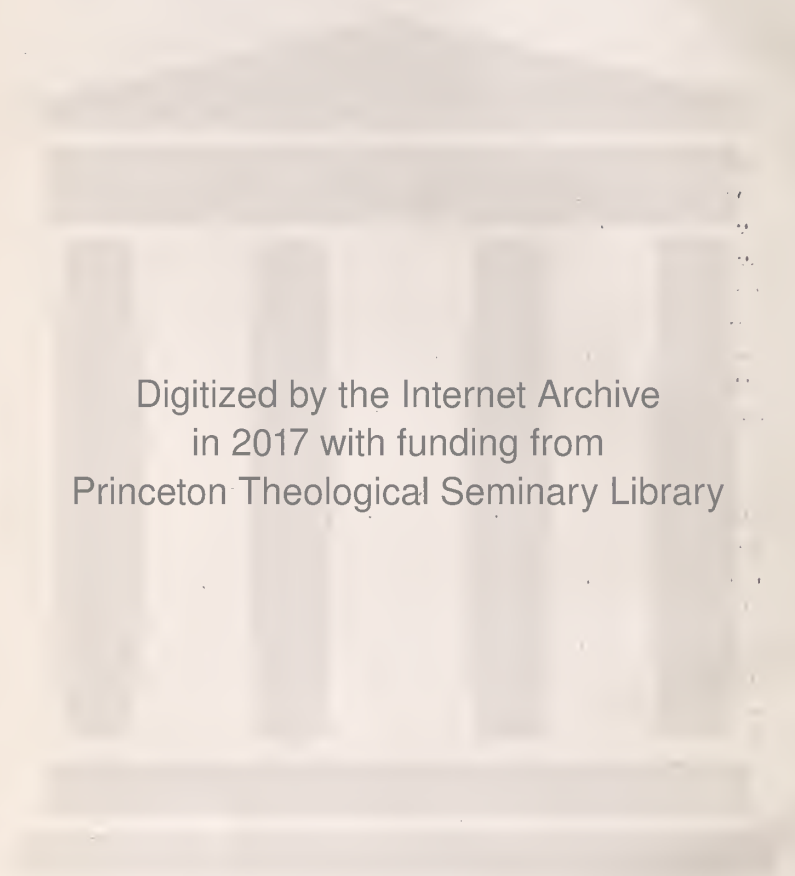
AT THE NEW WILLARD, WASHINGTON, D. C.
DECEMBER 17, 1910

PRINTED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL
RECORD OF JANUARY 11, 1911



WASHINGTON
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

1911



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ADDRESS.

We hear a great deal nowadays of movements and societies and legislative resolutions in favor of international peace, and I assume that no one would wish to be put in the position of denying that peace contributes greatly to the happiness of mankind, or of advocating war as an institution to be fostered in and of itself. To say that one is in favor of peace is not much more startling than to say that one is in favor of honesty, in favor of virtue, in favor of good, and opposed to evil. That from which the world can derive the most benefit is a practical suggestion leading to more permanent peace. Many have thought that this could be brought about by an agreement among the powers to disarm, and some sort of a convention by which the race to bankruptcy in the maintenance of great armies and the construction of great navies might cease and a gradual disarmament follow. Future events may justify some different conclusion, but movements in the past along this line have not been fruitful of practical results. Bankruptcy and the burdensome weight of debt involved in continued armament may bring about a change in the present national tendencies. Meantime, however, I am strongly convinced that the best method of ultimately securing disarmament is the establishment of an international court and the development of a code of international equity which nations will recognize as affording a better method of settling international controversies than war. We must have some method of settling issues between nations, and if we do not have arbitration, we shall have war. Of course the awful results of war, with its modern armaments and frightful cost of life and treasure, and its inevitable shaking of dynasties and governments, have made nations more chary of resort to the sword than ever before; and the present, therefore, because of this, would seem to be an excellent time for pressing the substitution of courts for force.

I am glad to come here and to give my voice in favor of the establishment of a permanent international court. I sincerely hope that the negotiations which Secretary Knox has initiated in favor of an international prize court—after the establishment of that court—will involve the enlargement of that court into a general arbitral court for international matters. It is quite likely that the provisions for the

constitution of the arbitral court will have to be different somewhat from those that govern the selection of members of the prize court, but I am glad to think that the two movements are in the same direction and are both likely to be successful.

What teaches nations and peoples the possibility of permanent peace is the actual settlement of controversies by courts of arbitration. The settlement of the Alabama controversy by the Geneva arbitration, the settlement of the seals controversy by the Paris Tribunal, the settlement of the Newfoundland fisheries controversy by The Hague Tribunal are three great substantial steps toward permanent peace, three facts accomplished that have done more for the cause than anything else in history.

If, now, we can negotiate and put through a positive agreement with some great nation to abide the adjudication of an international arbitral court in every issue which can not be settled by negotiation, no matter what it involves, whether honor, territory, or money, we shall have made a long step forward by demonstrating that it is possible for two nations at least to establish as between them the same system of due process of law that exists between individuals under a government.

It seems to be the view of many that it is inconsistent for those of us who advocate any kind of preparation for war or any maintenance of armed force or fortification to raise our voices for peaceful means of settling international controversies. But I think this view is quite unjust and is not practical. We only recognize existing conditions and know that we have not reached a point where war is impossible or out of the question, and do not believe that the point has been reached in which all nations are so constituted that they may not at times violate their national obligations.

Take, thus, the question of the Panama Canal. We have a property which when completed will be worth \$400,000,000—at least, it will have cost us that. It has been built not alone to further the cause of the world's commerce, but also to bring our eastern and western seaboards closer together and to secure us the military benefit enabling our naval fleet to pass quickly from one ocean to the other. Now, the works of the canal are of such a character that a war vessel might easily put the canal out of commission. We are authorized to police the canal and protect it, and we have the treaty right to erect fortifications there. Fortifications are the best and most secure method of protecting that canal against the attack of some irresponsible nation or armed force. It is said that we could neutralize the canal and by inducing all nations to agree not to attack the canal secure its immunity from injury. But the trouble is that nations are quite as likely as men to violate their obligations under great stress like that of war. It seems to me that we ought to put ourselves in a position with

reference to this very valuable and delicate piece of property so that, should any nation forget its obligation, we will be in a position to prevent unlawful injury to this instrument of commerce so valuable to the world and so indispensable to us. The fact that we fortify the canal will not prevent us from discharging all international obligations that we may have in respect to it, but it will enable us to defend ourselves in its possession against the act of every irresponsible force or nation. It will not prevent our maintaining its neutrality if that is wise and right.

I would like to invite attention to an interesting incident within the last month. Suppose a *Dreadnought* under the command of the men who have recently been in command of *Dreadnoughts* were to seek entrance to that canal by force. What we need is something to defend what is ours, and because we have the means of defending it is no reason why we should not neutralize the canal completely if that be wise.

Again, our strong feeling in favor of peace, it seems to me, ought not to prevent our taking the proper steps under existing conditions to maintain our national defenses. We have on the continent of the United States excellent coast defenses for every important harbor that an enemy could enter. We probably ought to see to it that we have ammunition and guns enough for ready use in case of emergency. We have a small but very efficient Army of 80,000 men. We have a militia of about 125,000 men. The Army is so constituted that we could enlarge it from a skeleton organization into a much larger body. We ought to have more trained officers, so as to furnish the teachers to a larger body of men that war might require us to enlist.

There has been a good deal of talk in the papers, and some reference in Congress, to the supposed helpless condition of this country in the event of a foreign invasion. I venture to think that much more has been made of this than the facts, calmly considered, would justify. We have a very good Navy, and with the opening of the Panama Canal it will be a much more effective one. It would be useful to prevent the coming of an invading army across the seas.

The people of this country will never consent to the maintenance of a standing army which military experts would pronounce sufficiently large to cope in battle with the standing armies of Europe, should they get by our Navy, avoid our harbor defenses, and descend upon our coast. If this leaves us in a position of helplessness, then so be it, for those who understand the popular will in this country know that it can not be otherwise. We shall do everything in the way of wise military preparation if we maintain our present Regular Army, if we continue to improve the National Militia, if we pass the pending volunteer bill, to go into operation when war is declared, and not to in-

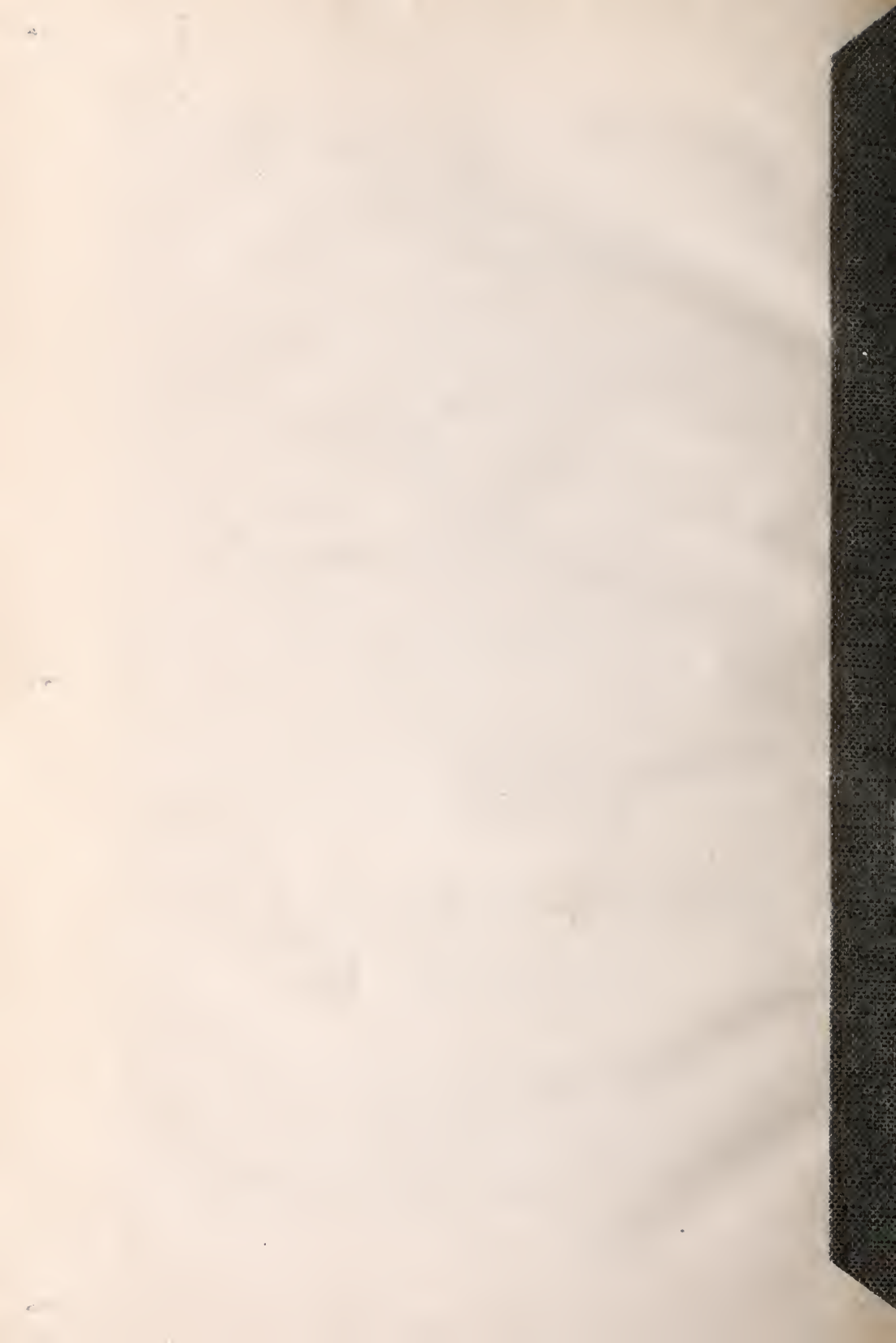
volve the nation in a dollar's worth of expense until the emergency arises; if we pass a law, now pending in Congress, which will give us a force of additional officers trained in the military art, and able in times of peace to render efficient service in drilling the militia of the States, and in filling useful quasi civil positions that are of the utmost advantage to the Government, and if we in a reasonable time accumulate guns and ammunition enough to equip and arm the force we could enlist under our colors in an emergency.

This discussion of needed military preparations does not sound very well at a peace meeting, but the trouble about a peace meeting is that it seems to me to be just one-half of the picture, and I want to introduce the whole picture in order that what is resolved here and what is said here may be understood to be said with a view to existing conditions and to the practical truth.

I have said this much in order to allay the so-called war scare which has furnished pabulum for the newspapers during the last few days. There is not the slightest reason for such a sensation. We are at peace with all the nations of the world, and are quite likely to remain so as far as we can see into the future. Just a little more forethought, a little more attention to the matter on the part of Congress, and we shall have all of the Army and all of the munitions and material of war that we ought to have in a republic situated, as we are, 3,000 miles on the one hand and 5,000 miles on the other from the source of possible invasion. Our Army is much more expensive per man than that of any other nation, and it is not an unmixed evil that it is so, because it necessarily restricts us to the maintenance of a force which is indispensable in the ordinary policing of this country and our dependencies and furnishes an additional reason for our using every endeavor to maintain peace.

I congratulate this association on the recent foundation of Mr. Carnegie, by which, under the wise guidance of Mr. Elihu Root, Mr. Knox, and their associates, an income of half a million of dollars annually is to be expended in the practical promotion of movements to secure permanent peace. The wide discretion given to the trustees, and their known ability, foresight, and common sense, insure the usefulness of the gift.

War has not disappeared and history will not be free from it for years to come, but the worst pessimist can not be blind to the fact that in the last 25 years long steps have been taken in the direction of the peaceful settlement of international controversies, and the establishment of a general arbitral court for all nations is no longer the figment of the brain of a dreamy enthusiast.



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